What Farmers Expect of New Administration

By E. E. MILLER

EIGHT years ago, when the appointment of Mr. Houston as Secretary of Agriculture was announced, a surprised and disappointed southern farmer commented thus on the news: "House-ton, Hooston, whoever or whatever he is—where in the dickens did the President find him, anyhow?"

Nobody asked such a question when the appointment of Secretary Wallace was announced. The farmers of the country knew him—knew of him, at least, and thought of him as one of themselves. Mr. Harding made a good impression on the farmers when he selected Mr. Wallace for Secretary of Agriculture, and he strengthened that impression when he declined to change his selection on account of the opposition of the packers. Many farmers do not favor the proposed packer regulation bills; but almost to a man they would have resented a packer veto on the choice of a Secretary of Agriculture.

The President has made a good start, then, with the farmers, both in his selection of agriculture's representative in the Cabinet and in his oft-repeated expressions of interest in the development of a more profitable agriculture and a finer and more satisfactory type of farm life. In all that he has said along these lines, however, he has tall ed only in the widest generalities, and farmers are not going to be satisfied with generalities. They are going to expect a great deal of the new administration. Mr. Harding's own words are responsible for part of these great expectations; the general feeling that farmers lately have not been getting all that was justly coming to them is responsible for part of them; the deliberate conviction of the majority of thinking farmers that they must have certain specific things in a legislative or administrative way to enable them to hold their own in the business world is responsible for still more of these expectations.

The First Thing Expected

WHAT things, then, we may ask, are these that the farmers expect of Mr. Harding and his party and what are the reasons for these expectations?

First of all, they are expecting that the administration make an effort, at least, to look at things from the farm point of view, that it have a sympathetic understanding of the farmer's particular problems and conditions. The evident lack of this understanding alienated the farmers generally from Mr. Wilson's administration, despite a record of constructive legislation of direct benefit to agriculture unequaled in any preceding administration, or in any three or four of them. The Federal Land Bank Act, the National Warehouse Act, the establishment of the Bureau of Markets, the inauguration of cost of production studies, and the development of the grain standardization work by the Department of Agriculture—these are all matters of vital importance to the farmers of the country. But the average farmer could not be expected to feel very grateful for them and what they might do for him in the future when he saw the administration apparently forgetting his interests, or failing to understand his most fundamental problems. A new policy in this regard, farmers will certainly and justly expect.

In the next place, farmers are going to expect a definite legal recognition of their right to combine for the marketing of their products. A bill to assure them of this right passed both Houses of the last Congress—amended so as to be valueless by the Senate—and then died in conference. Farmers do not feel exactly pleasant over this, and they are going to insist on the early passage of a satisfactory measure. Mr. Harding is definitely committed to such legislation and to the general policy of promoting co-operative activity among farmers. It is strange, from the farmer's point of view, that there should be any opposition to this policy, except possibly from the comparatively few people who profit by having the road from producer to consumer long and tortuous rather than short and straight. The farmer cannot understand, either, why his right to join with other farmers in the selling of his products so that he may have a voice in the pricing of them, as he now has not, should ever have been questioned. When he forms such associations and goes into the market place to bargain on equal terms with the buyer of his products, he is doing exactly what labor does when it forms a union and insists on helping determine its own wages, or what capital does when, by organizing a corporation, it masses the strength of many men for more effective business dealing. The farmer must learn to sell to better advantage, or one of two things will happen. Either farming will become so unprofitable that it will be hard to keep sufficient people on the farms to supply the country with food, or else the purchaser of food will have to pay ridiculously high prices for it. No man who has any real understanding of the situation can ever imagine that present prices of farm products, comparatively speaking, can be a permanent thing in this country of increasing industrial preponderance.

Present System a Scandal

INDEED, the present system of marketing farm products is a sad commentary on our boasted business efficiency. It is little than a national scandal that out of every dollar the consumer pays for food, only 45 cents should be paid for the production of that food, while 55 cents is paid for getting it from the producer to the consumer. Before the Great War, the Danish farmer, exporting his bacon and dairy products to England, got 60 per cent of what the British consumer paid for them. He got this larger per cent because he knew how to market co-operatively. The development of co-operative marketing by the farmers of this country is a matter of prime importance to them and of increasing importance to the consumers.

Of course, the government cannot develop such a system of marketing. Great business changes of this kind are not the result of legislation, but of the gradual development of economic forces. The shortcomings of the present machinery of distribution must be corrected by the people who raise food to sell and the people who buy it. At the same time, legislation and governmental policies can help or hinder the progress that is being made along this line. The farmer has a right to expect help from the incoming administration. A continuation and extension of the work of the Bureau of Markets, such strengthening of the National Warehouse Act as time may show needed, continued cost of production investigations, close observation of foreign markets and foreign trade tendencies—all these will help the farmer to sell his products to better advantage.

Credits Must Be More Flexible

THE farmer is expecting, too, and with right, the development of a more adequate and more flexible system of farm credits. Until the passage of the Federal Farm Loan Act, there had never been in this country any attempt by the national government to provide a system of credit to meet the needs of agriculture. The Farm Loan Act has already justified itself. It needs to be strengthened in some ways and extended; and to have as a companion to it legislation that will provide short-time personal credits for the rural districts. The need for such credit, the right of farmers to it, especially of farmers of small capital and little available collateral, and the beneficial effects certain to flow from sound legislation along this line, are all admitted by every student of this problem. Present banking systems, serviceable as they are to him, were not made for the farmer, and do not fit in with his conditions. A thorough study of the various proposals for making the farmer's potential credit resources available to him, and the early enactment of a carefully thought-out short-time credit act are things farmers will insist upon.

Farmers, again, have a right to insist upon more consideration than they have had in the making of tariff laws. Most tariffs have been written primarily to protect the manufacturing interests. The farmer has come to the place where he insists upon his share of "protection." There are high-tariff farmers and low-tariff farmers, but they are all going to insist that farming be given equal treatment with other industries in tariff making. This, in the long run, is going to mean an overwhelming rural protest against excessively high tariff rates. For this country is still a large exporter of farm products and the prices of all these products are largely determined by the prices of the export surplus. Unduly high import duties on manufactured goods are bound to add to the farmer's burdens, even though the duties on foreign farm products be sky high. As long as he produces a surplus that must be sold abroad, international supply and demand are going to be the most potent factors in the fixing of prices of farm products. The farmer will no longer be satisfied to go "unprotected" while other industries are bolstered by high tariffs, but it would be quite possible to "protect him almost to death."

Probably no pre-election promise of Mr. Harding pleased the farmers more than his promise of giving agriculture representation on the great semi-judicial and executive bodies that have come to play such an important part in our scheme of government. The Tariff Commission, for example, the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Federal Reserve Board—on these the farmers feel they have a right to be represented. The feeling is justifiable. The decisions and recommendations of these and similar bodies affect the farmers directly and often vitally. Right now, whether rightly or wrongly, most farmers are blaming the Federal Reserve Board for hastening the processes of "deflation" at the expense of agriculture. In whatever has to do with transportation or commerce, the farmer has an interest exceeded by that of no other class of business men.

And There Are Other Things, Too

THIS brings up the still unsettled questions of the railroads, of the waterways, of the public highways, and of the adjustment of all these to and with each other so as to give us a thoroughly serviceable and truly national system of transportation. It is becoming increasingly evident that the past policy of considering one means of transportation without regard to any of the others cannot solve the problem of cheap and speedy transportation. That it be solved, the welfare of the whole country demands, the welfare of the farmer especially. The value of his products is often determined by the ease with which he can get them to market. Whenever the means of transportation are lacking, or fail to function, the farmer's profits decrease and his place of residence becomes less desirable as a home. Every facility that brings him into closer touch with the outside world adds to both the profit and the pleasure of farming. The farmer has a right to expect from the approaching administration some real study of the whole big problem of transportation.

In addition to these matters of domestic policy, farmers are expecting—probably first of all—peace. A definite understanding of our international relations and a chance to get back as far as may be toward normal business relations with other countries are of vital importance to American agriculture.

Peace, actual and technical, and a settled foreign policy, must prepare the way for agricultural progress and prosperity.

The New Secretary of Agriculture

LIKE his immediate predecessor, the new Secretary of Agriculture, Henry C. Wallace, is a typical product of the Corn Belt. As Edward Meredith was a practical farmer and editor of a successful farm weekly, so Henry Wallace has held high place in the esteem and affection of a large agricultural constituency in Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska as a man whose knowledge of farming and its problems is born of practical experience and so could be trusted. For many years *Wallace's Farmer* has been a farm authority in the Mississippi Valley. The two men were neighbors in Des Moines and friends, despite their variance in political affiliation.

(C) Harris & Ewing

HENRY C. WALLACE, Secretary of Agriculture.

Specializing in stock raising and dairying, Secretary Wallace has from the first given earnest attention to the fullest development of his natural vocation and his fondness for farm life. In the best sense of the term, he is a scientific agriculturist, a modern cultivator of the soil and exponent of modern ideas and methods in the basic industry of the nation. Availing himself of every opportunity to obtain fuller knowledge, he has been quick to put his knowledge to the practical test in experiment on a constantly expanding scale, so he may rightfully be ranked with those whom a French philosopher declared are the true benefactors of mankind: the men who make two blades of grass grow where but one grew before.

Born at Rock Island, Illinois, 55 years ago, he was educated in the public schools and at the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, of Ames, Iowa. Soon after winning his B.S.A. degree, he established himself on a big farm in Adair County, Iowa, as a general farmer and breeder of thoroughbred live stock. For three years, beginning in 1893, he was also professor of dairying in Iowa State College. These experiences led up naturally to the newspaper career in which he has become since so well known, for he combined his professorship with the editorship of the *Creamery Gazette* and *Farm and Dairy*.

In 1895 he became manager and associate editor of *Wallace's Farmer*, in which position he continued until February, 1916, when he became editor, shortly afterward acquiring control of the publication. He is now president and treasurer of the Wallace Publishing Company and of the Capital City Printing Plate Company at Des Moines; a director of the Central State Bank and a member of the executive committee of the United States Live Stock Industry Commission, while he has been secretary of the Corn Belt Meat Producers' Association for 15 years. He is also permanent chairman of the National Shippers' Conference.

During the war, Mr. Wallace served as member of the Y. M. C. A. National War Work Council, and of the International Committee, in addition to being chairman of the Iowa State Executive Committee. A lifelong Republican, he is a member of the United Presbyterian Church and a "good mixer" generally. There is every prospect of his keeping the Federal Agricultural Department up to a high standard of efficiency and usefulness, and perhaps to set new standards that will mean much for the advancement of American farmers and farming.